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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PINR](#) [KBIO](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FOLLOWING GOI "CONCESSIONS," NATIONAL DIALOGUE
PARTY RETURNS TO PARLIAMENT HOPING TO UNSEAT MALIKI

Classified by Political Section Deputy Rob Waller for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (C) Dr. Mustapha Al Hiti, a senior parliamentarian in the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue Bloc (or, Hewan party led by Sunni politician Salah al Mutlaq), confirmed to poloffs on September 10 that Hewan had ended its two-month boycott of the Council of Representatives (CoR) after the government took action on a number of Hewan's issues. Those issues included the national hydrocarbons law, improving CoR performance, supporting Iraqi refugees, CoR relations with the Prime Minister, and the investigation into the April 2007 bombing at the CoR. Regardless of the supposed GOI "concessions" that smoothed Hewan's September 9 return to parliament, Hiti highlighted his party's focus on the oil law and the removal of PM Maliki. With U.S. pressure, he argued, the Kurds might abandon their "short-sighted" alliance with Maliki and the Shia to form a "National Salvation Front" government. Hiti, who holds a PhD in Pharmacology, bemoaned Iraq's severe depletion of intellectual talent due to the country's security problems. End summary.

Hewan's Five Demands Met

[¶2.](#) (C) During a September 10 meeting with poloffs, Dr. Mustapha Al Hiti confirmed that the Hewan parliamentary bloc (11 members) has ended its walk-out begun last July and returned to the legislature. Hiti, representing Hewan while its better-known leader Saleh Mutlaq remains abroad, said the party's decision to return was prompted by political progress by the Government of Iraq (GOI) in five key areas, namely: passage of a hydrocarbons law; payments to Iraqi refugees; PM Maliki's appearance before Parliament; strengthening parliamentary professionalism; and progress on the investigation into the April 2007 bomb attack in the CoR.

[¶3.](#) (C) Offering details on Hewan's core political concerns - shared widely by many of Iraq's Sunnis - Hiti focused on what he said were previous efforts to force a hydrocarbons law through the government with minimal consultation and debate among key political constituencies. The draft oil law, he said, would soon be debated again in parliament in the wake of senior political consultations (i.e., the August 26 leaders communique). This debate, he noted, would profoundly impact decisions on federalism and national reconciliation, and was not one that Hewan could be absent from. Kurdish ambitions to take control of oil-rich Kirkuk, he explained, and other northern regions of strategic importance to Iraq's Sunni community had to be challenged.

[¶4.](#) (C) Hiti said another agreement was recently struck

between key political actors to improve the professionalism and credibility of government administration and oversight. On September 9, he said, the CoR Speaker, his two deputies, and leaders of the CoR's major political blocs, agreed that political bloc leaders would sit with each CoR committee to review its accomplishments and goals, and work to eliminate any obstacles to better performance. A key aim of the process, he said, would be to remove unqualified personnel and challenge the system of party-based job apportionment both in the CoR and the ministries.

15. (C) Highlighting Hewar's complaint that the CoR lacked a mechanism by which to compel the PM to appear before parliament for questioning and debate, Hiti said PM Maliki agreed that he would accept the CoR's invitation to address the body on September 10. Hiti, having just come from that session with Maliki, bragged that he had questioned the PM in front of the entire CoR, "How can you call this a government of national unity when 17 of 36 ministers are not participating in your cabinet?" Maliki, he said, did not reply. As for Hewar's other issues of concern, Hiti said the GOI had just announced a decision to pay Iraqi refugees and displaced persons roughly USD 120 each to help address their pressing needs. Lastly, the Ministry of Interior had promised, he said, to provide an update on its progress into investigating the April 2007 bombing that occurred in the CoR cafeteria which killed several CoR members.

"With the Kurds, We Can Oust the PM"

16. (C) Hiti returned to the subject of inter-factional alliances, casting scorn on the Kurdish decision to align

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with the Shia in government for their own "short-term" interest to secure territorial gains from Sunnis in areas like Kirkuk. This approach was not conducive to true national reconciliation, and should be challenged by Washington, he argued. The Kurds, he said, are allied with the Shia in return for promises from them to consolidate control over resource-rich territory in the north that are claimed by Sunni Arabs. Why should the Kurds get away with taking positions at odds with efforts at national reconciliation, he asked rhetorically. He derided a comment reportedly made by the KRG Oil Minister at a recent conference in Dubai, wherein the Kurdish official "rudely" told attendees that if the draft oil law is further amended, he would "throw it in the trash." Oil, Hiti added, is a resource of the state, and revenues from its sale must be shared equally among its citizens.

Comment

17. (C) Hewar's return to the CoR marks a positive step for the democratic process, though it appears to be only a tactical shift in the party's strategy. The party bolted (in July) at a time of maximum U.S. pressure on PM Maliki, most likely hoping that if the PM was forced out, Hewar/Mutlaq could claim significant credit for the ouster and increase its stature vis-a-vis other Sunni politicians. Back in government, Hewar's focus will remain the same: the ouster of Maliki, a stronger voice in governance for Sunnis, and influence on the outcome of hydrocarbons debate (and other issues that will impact the Sunni heartland such as Provincial Powers and de-Baathification). Splitting the Kurds from Maliki and the Shia will also remain a key goal, as will efforts to convince Washington to join Sunni Arab neighbors (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan) to help Ayad Allawi regain the reins of government.

Bio Notes

¶8. (C/NOFORN) Al Hiti was born in 1949 in Anbar Province and received most of his education in Baghdad. He earned a PhD in Pharmacology in London and later took a job at the College of Pharmacology at Baghdad University. He remained an educator there and a member of the Baath Party up to the fall of Saddam's regime. After reported disagreements with Saddam (NFI), Hiti became a founding member of the (now defunct) Brotherhood and Peace Party. Following the ouster of Saddam, threats on Hiti's life led him to relocate his family to Amman where he took up a teaching post at Amman University. Hiti reportedly accepted Coalition assistance in rebuilding the School of Pharmacology at Baghdad University, where he later became Dean and President of the University. Bemoaning Iraq's brain drain problem, Hiti said that he had been one of 100 PhD's in Baghdad University's Pharmacology College in ¶2003. In 2005, he said, there were only 3 PhD's in the department, either murdered or living outside the country.
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